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CABLES: OIKOUMENE GENEVA · TELEPHONE 36 71 30 · 17 ROUTE DE MALAGNOU, GENEVA

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UNITED KINGDOM

1,150 Attend Kirk Week


(Aberdeen) - Scotland's first Kirk Week ended on August 11, after 1,150 delegates from 150 towns in Scotland and 23 other nations had spent a week in Aberdeen, listening to speeches, taking part in Bible study and working together in small discussion groups (see EPS No. 10).

Kirk Week, patterned after the famous German Kirchentag, opened on August 4 with a sermon by the moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Rt. Rev. George F. MacLeod, who said that the question "no longer is whether we are going to have church union. The question is how we are to have a church union."

Preaching in West Church of St. Nicholas at a civic service attended by Lord Provost Stephen Nicholas and Aberdeen Town Council members, Dr. MacLeod discussed the challenge of Kirk Week, saying that by its intricate and varied programme it offered a warning against a too facile or easy-going view of conversion. "Salvation is free, but we are not its passive recipients," he said. "Kirk Week gives us half a chance to work out our salvation."

Other speakers during the session included Mr. Klaus von Bismarck of Germany, Dr. G.G.C. Quarles van Ufford of the Netherlands, Mr. M.J. Sargunam of India, Dr. Robert Mackie of Scotland, chairman of the Kirk Week Executive Committee, Sir Thomas Taylor, principal of Aberdeen University and chairman of Kirk Week, Mr. W.S. Robertson, secretary of the Scottish Council. Bible study was led by the Rev. Joseph E. Fison of the Church of England, and Professor James S. Stewart of Edinburgh.

As the week closed, the Rev. Colin Day, who had been the organising secretary for the huge meeting, listed some of the reactions. Most important, he stressed, was the sense of being in community. "It was almost unbearable. It is not possible to count the number of times people came to me with glistening eyes,



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to say, not that Kirk Week was a great thing, but rather that they had found a new trust in other people and a new understanding through the facing up to issues in the small, very personal groups."

"There was something excitedly sane about the enthusiasm that built up as the week went on," Mr. Day said, adding that the enthusiasm was not for preaching or for better speaking "or anything of the kind. Rather it was that people were responding to the dominant beat of Kirk Week, that Christ is indeed Lord of all life, and that no vestige of experience, of activity, or of development in any area of living is outside His Kingship."

A practical outcome is emerging already, Mr. Day said, "that is convincing us that Kirk Week has been a truly momentous occasion in the life of the Church of Scotland. It is symbolised by the remark of a group leader who said that the group discussions were a shambles for the first day, but by the third day such a sense of the Church had come to them as staggered them with its reality".

Speakers Stress Role of the Church

During the week, these people said these things:

"Today the Church is waking up to its true function and the world cannot stop it. It is right in the world through its members. Through ordinary men and women the Church touches the world at every point and in every aspect of its life." - Dr. Robert Mackie.

"I believe that the new developments in science are of such a radical character that there are only three other changes in the whole history of mankind which compare in importance - the invention of the wheel, the invention of fire and the breeding of crops and animals. I believe that it is much more important in material terms than anything that has happened in the last 2,000 years." - Mr. W.S. Robertson.

"With all these great new powers increasingly at our command, there arises the question, What is the relationship of all this to God's will? How are we going to avoid becoming slaves of our new material civilisation?" - Sir Thomas Taylor.

"The Church is sent into the world as a serving community, not only in the sense that members serve each other, but that they also serve the world. Some of the newly-awakened laymen experience this commission of the Church upon themselves, even if it is only seeing through a glass darkly, and they hope to see God's perfect plan in future times." - Mr. Klaus von Bismarck.

E.P.S., Geneva

Keith Bridston Appointed Faith and Order Executive Secretary

The Rev. Keith R. Bridston, 33, a former missionary teacher in Indonesia, has been appointed executive secretary of the Department of Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches. Dr. Bridston will begin his one-year appointment in September.

A native of Grand Forks, North Dakota, USA, Dr. Bridston was professor on the faculty of theology at Nommensen University, Pematang Siantar, Sumatra, Indonesia, from 1954 to May, 1957. In 1952-53 he was visiting professor at the Higher Theological Faculty, Djakarta, Java, Indonesia.

Dr. Bridston was on the staff of the World's Student Christian Federation in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1949 to 1952. In 1954 he was secretary to the Committee on the Main Theme of the WCC's Assembly in Evanston, Illinois. At the World Conference on Faith and Order in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, he was in charge of a special conference for theological students.

The young Faith and Order secretary is a minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale College, a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from New College, Edinburgh University.

Dr. Bridston succeeds Dr. J. Robert Nelson, who has been elected dean of the Vanderbilt University School of Religion in Nashville, Tennessee.

E.P.S., Geneva

HUNGARY

Lutherans Hold First Assembly Since 1954

For the first time since 1954 the Lutheran Church in Hungary has held its General Assembly, according to reports from the Hungarian Church Press. On July 10, in Budapest, presiding Bishop Lajos Ordass presented his report to the Assembly and expressed gratitude to Lutherans throughout the world for their "generous" aid to Hungarian Christians in "recent difficult times".

Bishop Ordass said that Hungarian Lutherans "have kept up brotherly contacts with world Lutheranism for a long time".

Looking toward the future, Bishop Ordass said it was natural to ask: What is the situation of our church in the state? "We can state here again, as we have done often in recent times, that our church lives in the Hungarian People's Republic and under the provisions of an agreement, concluded with the state, in 1948. Church and state have both declared that they want to stand by the terms of that agreement. Our hope is that the state is going to recognise the rights of the church, assured in that agreement. As for ourselves, we are resolved to keep all the obligations undertaken in the agreement on behalf of our church. This is a suitable foundation for carrying on the church's work and service, in the preaching of the word and in administering Christian charity."

The main business during the meeting was the election of new officials. Dr. Ervin Göttche was elected Convener of Legal Affairs and the Rev. Imre Veöreös, the pastor of Kecskemét and editor of "Lelkipasztor", monthly review for pastors and theology scholars, is the new general secretary. Pastor Andras Keken, of Deak Square Church and editor of the church weekly, "Evangélikus Elet", was elected Notary General, and Dr. Aladar Welsz, legal expert of the North Church District, was named Lay Notary General.

Other news from Hungary, as reported by the Hungarian Church Press, includes:

The six-man delegation to the Lutheran World Federation Third Assembly, in session from August 15 to 31 in Minneapolis, Minnesota, left Budapest on July 27. Making the trip were Bishop Ordass, leader of the delegation; Bishop Jozsef Szabo; Theological Academy Dean Deszö Wiczian; Professor Gyula Nagy; Pastor Karoly Havenscher and Pastor Andras Keken.

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Two Hungarian clergymen attended the Central Committee meeting of the World Council of Churches in New Haven, Connecticut, on July 31 - August 7. They were the Rev. Gyula Muraközy, director of the Office of the General Convent of the

Reformed Church and general secretary of the Hungarian Ecumenical Council, and Professor Laszlo Marton Pakozdy. (In New Haven, Central Committee chairman Franklin Clark Fry said that Professor Pakozdy was appointed by the Reformed Church as a substitute for committee member Professor Laszlo Pap, and Pastor Muraközy was the fraternal delegate from the Ecumenical Council.)

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The Ecumenical Council of the Hungarian Protestant Churches was reshaped at a meeting on July 5. The membership will consist of 24 Reformed, 12 Lutheran, three Baptist and one Methodist members. The officers of the council are: Bishop D. Albert Bereczky, president; D. Lajos Vetö, vice-president; the Rev. Gyula Muraközy, director of the Office of the General Convent; Pastor Pal Kosa, secretary.

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Chinese Protestant church leaders have written to the Reformed Church in Hungary, expressing "our warm greetings and brotherly love. Ever since the tragic happenings in your country last October", the letter continues, "we have been greatly concerned about your welfare and the development of your church". The Chinese said that they had the impression that Hungary was "facing the alternative of either falling a prey to subversive activities, thus leading to chaos and war, or preserving the foundations of the socialist order with the assistance of socialist countries while making steady efforts to rectify past mistakes. We are glad that it turned out to be the latter." The Chinese Protestants expressed a desire for fellowship with the Hungarians and for a unity that will "involve a close cooperation among all the Christians and a genuine identification with the best interests of our fellow-countrymen". Signing the letter was Y.T. Wu, chairman of the Three-Self Movement of the Christian Churches in China, and nineteen other Christian leaders.

E.P.S., Geneva

THAILAND

An End and a New Beginning

The Presbyterian Church in the USA has ended 130 years of missionary activity in Thailand by turning over all its property to the Church of Christ in Thailand. Included in the transfer were churches, major medical establishments and agricultural training facilities. The 69 Presbyterian missionaries in the country will become fraternal workers under the direction of the Thai Church.

The Presbyterian Church will continue to contribute \$370,000 to the Thai Church each year, the amount of the present missionary budget. The development in Thailand marks the fifth time in recent years that the Presbyterian Church USA has turned over an entire mission field to the indigenous church.

E.P.S., Geneva

U.S.S.R. Moscow Patriarchate Holds Reception for 600 Festival Participants

(Sagorsk) - About 600 young Christians from abroad attended a reception given by the Moscow Patriarchate at the historic Troiza Monastery at Sagorsk, during this year's Mosco Youth Festival. Metropolitan Nikolai, head of the Office for Foreign Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, welcomed the guests, saying, "We strive for peace not only for the sake of human ideals, but as Christians pursuing Christian ideals."

Young Christians from France, Italy, Germany, England, Poland, Scandinavia and the United States gathered with the clergy and the students of the monastery

for a service in the famous Troiza Sergieva Lavra (abbey), which dates back to the fourteenth century. Later, a lively discussion on religious life in Russia and elsewhere developed among the participants, and the question arose as to how far Christianity and Marxism are compatible. During the discussion, Russian students stressed that they adhere to their Christian beliefs. "We are Christians and we shall remain Christians", said one Russian theologian.

The Russian theological students and clergymen, who had come from all parts of the Soviet Union, reported on the church life in the USSR. They said there were 20,000 Orthodox churches and 35,000 priests in this country. Eight thousand monks live in about 50 monasteries. Eight seminaries and two academies are training young priests. There is, the Russians said, no shortage of young priests, because many youths decide to enter the priesthood. The income of priests is said to be comparatively large. The Russians reported that the Orthodox Church is not poor although it receives no state subsidies and is dependent on gifts from its members. At the same time, church attendance is reported to be good and not restricted to old people. Rather, the theologians said, the majority of churchgoers are young people, men and women, workmen, peasants and intellectuals.

The Festival participants said they found the monastery at Sagorsk in excellent condition. The visitors travelled in 30 buses from Moscow to Sagorsk and said they saw many newly-restored churches during the 50-mile trip.

There have been no reports of visits with Roman Catholic or Protestant congregations during the festival. Before the festival, an English delegation had asked for such contacts (see EPS No. 26). E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANY

Mennonite World Conference Meets at Karlsruhe

(Karlsruhe) - The 6th World Conference of Mennonites closed on August 16 at Karlsruhe with an appeal to all Christians, "in imitation of and obedience to Christ, to renounce all things which are in contradiction to reconciliation in Christ and His love".

The message speaks with "serious anxiety" of growing rearmament with increasingly deadly weapons. An urgent warning about the unpredictable dangers of weapons of mass destruction was also made to all nations manufacturing or testing nuclear weapons. The International Mennonite Peace Committee reminded governments of their moral obligation which goes far beyond political considerations. The use of atomic weapons, the committee said, is a menace to the health of all men for an immeasurable length of time.

The principle of conscientious objection, professed by the Mennonites for centuries, was reaffirmed by the World Conference. In a speech on "Witness for Peace and Conscientious Objection", Mr. J.H. Yoder (USA) declared that witness for peace in the sense of the Christian message was not pacifism and must not be confused with political aims and aspects.

The World Conference addressed a message to Mennonites in the Soviet Union, expressing the hope that delegates from Russia would be able to participate in the next world conference. Representatives of approximately 50,000 Mennonites in Soviet Russia were not present at the Karlsruhe meeting because the government refused to grant exit permits. Though the Mennonites in the USSR are not recognised by the authorities as churches, they may hold services regularly in private houses.

The president of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Bishop Otto Dibelius, sent a message of greetings to the 250 delegates at Karlsruhe and to the 1,000 visitors from the United States, Canada, Uruguay, Paraguay, India, Indonesia, Switzerland, Netherlands, France, and East and West Germany.

The Mennonites belong to the historic peace churches. The first Mennonite congregations were founded during the Reformation period by the European pastor, Menno Simens. Persecutions were frequent at that time as the Mennonite congregations adhered firmly to their religious principles. Today the Mennonites are split into many small groups all over the world. Their total membership is approximately 500,000. The German Mennonite Church (Vereinigung der Deutschen Mennonitengemeinden) and the Dutch General Mennonite Society are member churches of the World Council of Churches. The Mennonite Central Committee is considered one of the most important international church relief agencies. E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, an American Negro body, is planning to build a seminary in Ghana to train Ghanaian ministers and lay leaders. Bishop Daniel E. Pope, who has charge of the church's work in West Africa, said the church will also build a number of clinics in Ghana. Another plan calls for sending four Ghanaians to be trained in the U.S., two as ministers and two as lay leaders.

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"Faith and Conscience", a monthly magazine published by a small group of clergymen and theologians in the DDR, says that only a small number of Protestant pastors are actively cooperating with the Soviet authorities in Eastern Germany. "Unfortunately, it cannot be denied", the paper said, "that our regional churches in East Germany have for several years been withdrawing more and more from co-operation with the constructive forces in our republic".

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For the first time, German Evangelicals and Roman Catholics have held joint talks on the interpretation of the Bible. Speaking at the meeting, which took place at the Evangelical Academy at Bad Tutzling, Bavaria, were Dr. Paul Schütz, former New Testament professor at Hamburg University, a Protestant; and Professor Fritz of Munich, a Roman Catholic.

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Bishop Otto Dibelius, of Germany, a president of the World Council of Churches, met with President Eisenhower in Washington recently. Bishop Dibelius, who is president of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, was in the United States for the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC.

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The three bishops and the secretary of the Old Catholic Church Federation of Yugoslavia were received by the Yugoslavian Ministry for Church Affairs during the recent Bishops' Conference of the Federation. Bishop Dobrovoljac said that the Yugoslav Old Catholic Church Federation wants union with all Old Catholic Churches in the world, as long as its own independence is safeguarded.

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An international exhibit on "Evangelical Church Building Today" is being organised in Berlin from August 22 to September 29 by the Evangelical "Kirchenbautag" in connection with the International Building Exhibition. On display will be examples of the variety of modern church buildings that have gone up since the end of the war. During the exhibit, from September 5 to 9, a conference will be held on "Churches in the Towns of the Future".

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The Peace Committees of the Hungarian Lutheran Church and the Hungarian Reformed Church have both issued pleas for churchmen in other countries to help Hungarian children who fled their homeland alone after the October revolt to return to their parents. Letters have gone to churches in Austria, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, the United States and Canada.

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The current issue of the official publication of the Evangelical Church in Germany has been confiscated by East German police. The action marked the second time in recent weeks that the paper has been confiscated.

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The Council of the District of Potsdam has accused Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin-Brandenburg of violating the constitution of the DDR by "glorifying war". The official announcement said that Bishop Dibelius would continue to be refused admittance into the DDR as long as he "advocates NATO policy and preparations for war". Bishop Dibelius has not been allowed to enter the Eastern Zone for several months (see EPS Nos. 11, 15/16). Answering the attacks against the bishop, Dr. Walter Braun, general superintendent of the Kurmark, wrote to the council that the bishop had spoken countless times against hatred in any form.

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According to reports, an Israeli court in Jerusalem has found Archimandrite Joachim el Anthony, head of the Coptic Church of Jordan, guilty of espionage for Jordan.

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The German Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU) has announced a plan to set up working conferences in West Germany and Berlin during the coming year to strengthen contacts with united churches in other countries. Taking part will be Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, one of the leading clergymen of the Church of South India.

E.P.S., Geneva

